

Nagasaki Peace Declaration

Nuclear weapons have the horrible potential to annihilate humanity. On August 9th at 11:02 a.m., 54 years ago, our city of Nagasaki was instantly transformed into charred ruins by a single plutonium type atomic bomb. Countless people suffered agonizing death from the heat rays of several thousand degrees Centigrade, the incredible blast force, and dreaded radiation. Those who somehow managed to survive have borne their wounds, both emotional and physical, for more than half a century. Many of those who remain today live in a state of loneliness and anxiety.

From this hellish experience, we have gained the conviction that the existence of nuclear weapons cannot be tolerated, and we have continued to appeal to the world for their absolute elimination.

Nuclear tension throughout the world has been exacerbated since May of last year, when both India and Pakistan conducted underground nuclear tests. As was amply demonstrated by the hints of the possible use of nuclear weapons suggested during the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia, the world is indeed treading a perilous path. Even now, the nuclear-weapon states remain wedded to the outdated illusion of nuclear deterrence.

Nevertheless, there are strong indications of positive movement as we approach the 21st century. Represented by initiatives such as Abolition 2000 and the Hague Appeal for Peace 1999, dynamic actions are being taken by NGOs seeking the elimination of nuclear weapons, and worldwide public opinion is increasingly supportive of peace. When these forces are collectively brought to bear on the governments of the nations of the world, the elimination of nuclear weapons can most certainly be achieved. It is the unavoidable responsibility of those who have lived in the 20th century to seek the rapid conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear weapons prohibition treaty, and we appeal in the strongest possible terms to the leaders of the nations of the world to issue a Nuclear Weapons Abolition Proclamation before the end of the century.

Even today, the world remains subject to war and regional conflict. The use of military force to press the demands of a particular group must be seen as an enormous violation of human rights and a major cause of environmental destruction. We appeal to the world for the construction of peace without the implementation of military force, for mutual respect and recognition of the differences among peoples, religions, and cultures, and for the cultivation of trust through dialogue.

We urge the Japanese government to accept the resolution adopted in December of last year by the General Assembly of the United Nations, entitled “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: The need for a new agenda,” which consists of concrete recommendations for the abolition of nuclear weapons. As the only nation ever to have been subjected to nuclear devastation, Japan must play a leading role in their elimination. Following the imminent conclusion of treaty for a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Central Asia, efforts must be made for the establishment of a similar zone in Northeast Asia; a security framework must be constructed that does not require a nuclear umbrella. At the same time, Japan must openly review its own history of invasion and aggression in Asia and the Pacific, recommit itself to the defense of its peace-based constitution, and build relationships of trust founded on true mutual understanding. Furthermore, we ask that greater attention be devoted to the care of the increasingly elderly atomic bomb survivors, residing both within Japan, and abroad.

Next, we ask the world’s young people to each consider what he or she can do to make the next century one of peace and prosperity. Let each prepare to make a contribution to the surmounting of starvation and poverty, to the preservation of the environment, to the safeguarding of human life, and to development of a society based on cooperation among the people of the world.

The participants in the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues, held in Nagasaki in November of last year, unanimously resolved to “Reaffirm their commitments to ensure that Nagasaki will remain the last city in the world to have suffered from the calamity of nuclear weapons,” and we took great hope from this sign of progress. Nagasaki is characterized both by a long history of international interchange and by the unspeakably tragic experience of the atomic bombing. We in Nagasaki shall work to make our city a center of peace studies, to proclaim to the world the horrible truth of nuclear devastation, and to expand the circle of peace to include all the peoples of the globe.

On this, the 54th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, we pray for the repose of the souls of the vast number of people who lost their lives. In their memory, we the citizens of Nagasaki declare to the world our goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, and vow to rededicate ourselves to its realization.

Ichio Itoh
Mayor of Nagasaki
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